

*These guidelines have been updated as a result of the 2000 U.S. Census, and to accommodate maintenance of the federal-aid urban boundaries in the Michigan Geographic Framework (GIS). — MDOT, June 2000*

## **Guidelines for Updating Federal-aid Urban Boundaries**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of these instructions is to provide the criteria and guidance for establishing, revising, and updating federal-aid urban boundaries. Federal-aid urban boundaries are necessary for several important reasons, including determining eligibility for federal-aid, statistical reporting, highway and street functional classification determination, as well as distribution of Act 51 funds.

### **Definitions**

1. Urban area. Title 23 of the United States Code, Section 101 (a), provides the following definitions for urban area, at a minimum:
  - a. An urban cluster, as designated by the Bureau of the Census and having a population of 5,000 to 49,999, and not within any urbanized area, or
  - b. An urbanized area, as designated by the Bureau of the Census, being an area comprising a place and the adjacent densely settled surrounding territory that together have a minimum population of 50,000 people.
2. Federal-aid Urban Boundary.
  - a. For urban clusters (par. 1a), the federal-aid urban boundary shall encompass, as a minimum, the urban cluster boundary as designated by the Bureau of the Census, and the entire corporate limits of any incorporated city or village designated as partially urban by the census. In addition, adjacent areas meeting the criteria may be included as agreed upon by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) in cooperation with responsible local officials. In Michigan, the resulting area is also known as a “small urban area.”
  - b. For urbanized areas (par. 1b), the federal-aid urban boundary shall encompass, as a minimum, the entire urbanized area within Michigan as designated by the Bureau of the Census, and the entire corporate limits of any incorporated city or village designated as partially urbanized by the Census. In addition, adjacent areas may be included as agreed upon by MDOT in cooperation with responsible local officials. This usually

means that a number of incorporated cities or villages will be included within a single urbanized area.

3. Responsible local officials.

- a. For urban clusters or “small urban areas,” (par. 2a), the term "responsible local officials" means the principal city and county officials who have been designated by the governing body to be responsible for and who represent the governmental body in transactions with MDOT. In unincorporated areas, this refers to the County Engineer, and in municipal areas, it generally means the Street Administrator or comparable position. Approval of the boundary at the local level should be by action of the responsible local officials. MDOT will cooperate with these officials and with local public transit operators, where appropriate, in establishing the federal-aid urban boundary locations for urban clusters or “small urban areas.”
- b. In urbanized areas (par. 2b), the term "responsible local officials" means the principal officials of local governments acting through the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). Approval of the boundary at the local level should be by action of the MPO. MDOT will cooperate with these officials and with local public transit operators, where appropriate, in establishing the federal-aid urban boundary locations for urbanized areas.

4. Approval Authority. Following MDOT concurrence with the federal-aid urban boundaries approved at the local level, they will be submitted to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for final approval.

5. Rural areas. Areas outside of the established federal-aid urban boundaries shall be considered rural.

**Criteria for Establishing and Revising Federal-aid Urban Boundaries**

1. Federal-aid urban boundaries shall consist of a continuous line encompassing one or more contiguous municipalities or other urban area, as per the definitions in paragraph 2. There shall be no detached portions of any federal-aid urban area.
2. A federal-aid urban area may include any adjacent area that has or is developing urban characteristics. "Urban characteristics" include the following features: residential, commercial, and industrial development; streets or highways, possibly with sidewalks and curbs; street lighting; sanitary and storm drainage facilities; transit service; police and fire protection. All of these characteristics do not necessarily have to be present, but sufficient evidence must be available to show that the area has or is developing urban characteristics.

Parks, stadiums, airports and other transportation terminals, schools, and other similar uses shall be considered as urban in character and may be included within the federal-aid urban boundary if adjacent to the urban area.

3. It is the general nature of urban growth to develop in randomly located subdivisions and developments, and then to gradually fill in the intervening vacant land. It shall be a matter of policy that any area proposed for inclusion in the federal-aid urban area meet a density requirement of 1,000 persons per square mile.
4. Strip development along a single roadway will not in and of itself be sufficient for inclusion in a federal-aid urban area.
5. Two or more incorporated places, of which at least one is 5,000 or more population, which are linked together by adjoining boundaries or intervening urban developments meeting the required population density shall be considered as a single federal-aid urban area.
6. Federal-aid urban boundaries shall be as simple and direct as possible and so delineated that they can be located in the field from data shown on maps. If boundaries are proposed outside the Census boundary or corporate limits, they should follow geographical features such as township lines, streams, railroads or streets. To the extent possible, federal-aid urban boundaries shall follow the representation of such features as they exist within the Michigan Geographic Framework (GIS).
7. Wherever the federal-aid urban boundary follows a highway, road, or street, that road shall be considered urban. Within the GIS, the urban attribution, as with related attributions, such as National Functional Classification and Act 51 designation, follows the centerline of the highway, road, or street.
8. Boundaries should be located so as to smooth out irregularities, maintain administrative continuity of peripheral routes, and encompass fringe areas having residential, commercial, industrial, and/or national defense significance. Careful consideration should be given to the selection of boundary locations which will include logical control points for transportation linkages such as interchanges, major cross roads, etc., where the inclusion of such areas will not unduly distort the urban area as would otherwise be selected. Boundaries should not, however, be modified to accommodate a single project.
9. Federal-aid urban boundary determinations should consider the service areas of transit operations. Such considerations are particularly important if boundaries are to determine eligibility of capital projects, e.g. commuter railroad lines and stations, and rail transit and bus lines.

10. In cases where a single federal-aid urban area extends across state borders, the contiguous states are encouraged to agree on the proposed boundary locations at the state line and avoid irregularities.
11. Special conditions not otherwise covered will be considered on an individual basis.

### **Procedures for Requesting Interim Updates to Federal-aid Urban Boundaries**

It is recognized that federal-aid urban boundaries are subject to expansion for various reasons, such as: completion and habitation of new subdivisions, establishment of parks contiguous to the existing boundaries, annexations, etc. When an expansion of an urban area is deemed necessary, and it is not time for a statewide update following the decennial Census, the following procedures should be followed:

1. Request in writing that MDOT, (Manager of the Statewide Planning Section) conduct a review of the area in question. Submit a map showing the revision and documentation supporting the request.
2. MDOT will conduct a review and, if necessary, a field investigation, and discuss the requested revision with the requesting agency representative to ensure compliance with these procedures.
3. The affected local agencies will submit to MDOT a resolution indicating that the provisions for establishing federal-aid urban boundaries have been met.
4. MDOT will submit the proposed federal-aid urban boundary to FHWA for approval.
5. MDOT will notify the local agency (or agencies) of the final determination.
6. All requests for federal-aid urban boundary revisions should be submitted no later than December 31 of each year. If approved, the effective date for certification, under Act 51, will be July 1 of the following year. Other funding implications, such as changes in functional classification of roads leading to federal-aid eligibility, or eligibility for Transportation Economic Development Fund, Categories D or F, will take effect as of the date of FHWA approval of the federal-aid urban boundary revision.